

WASHINGTON – Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) issued this statement following the death of Cuban prisoner of conscience Orlando Zapata Tamayo:

“Today, we mourn a life that should never have been lost. Orlando Zapata Tamayo was wrongly imprisoned and brutally tortured—the victim of an oppressive Cuban regime that denied him both fundamental medical treatment and the basic democratic right to dissent. His 82-day hunger strike was more than a protest against the government-sanctioned beatings he was subjected to in prison. It was the story of one man’s never-ending pursuit of freedom.

I extend my deepest sympathies and wish his loved ones comfort in their time of great pain. Unfortunately, the Cuban government’s assault on dignity and its denial of human rights have not ended with Orlando’s life, and it is our mission to not let this courageous man die in vain. The United States must heed Orlando Zapata Tamayo’s call to fight for justice for Cubans and make his struggle our own.”

Tamayo died yesterday in Havana after a hunger strike of nearly three months. He had staged the protest to demand respect for his personal safety after enduring several acts of torture at the hands of Cuban prison authorities. Amnesty International recognized him as a prisoner of conscience. He was 42.